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Articles in Today's Clips Monday, October 29, 2007

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THE BAY CITY TIMES

Three Bay City residents face child abuse charges

Monday, October 29, 2007

By **CRYSTAL McMORRIS**

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Burned, beaten and weighing just 31 pounds, the 7-year-old Bay City boy insisted, at first, that everything was fine.

"Everyone loves me and cares about me," the child told investigators on Sept. 7, according to court records. Child-abuse investigators came to Bay Regional Medical Center, where the boy's father had brought him because of a festering burn that wouldn't heal.

He eats plenty, the tiny child told investigators, listing a child's dream menu of double cheeseburgers, pizzas, macaroni and cheese, scrambled eggs and Fruity Pebbles he'd consumed in recent days.

Those bruises on his bottom?

"I sit a lot," he explained.

And those burns on his arms?

The boy described a series of fantastic accidents: Reaching for a toy, he seared his arm on a pot of spaghetti. Another time, he walked into a stranger's house and bumped into a cigar, or maybe that happened at the casino or a bowling alley. Oh, and some of them are sunburns.

"I forget to wear sunscreen sometimes," he said.

Eventually, however, another story emerged - one of alleged abuse at the hands of his father and another couple the boy and his dad began living with after losing their West Side home to foreclosure.

Those allegations have lead to criminal charges.

Michael S. Harsha, 35, Michael Pasquale, 32, and Cassandra Pasquale, 30, each have been charged with one count of first-degree child abuse and one count of second-degree child abuse. If convicted, each faces up to 15 years in prison.

The three live at 1407 Ninth St. Harsha had signed papers making the Pasquales legal guardians of his son in June. The boy's mother died when he was 4 years old, according to his father.

Upon receiving reports that the child was in danger, a social worker from the Department of Human Services visited the home in September and saw a large burn on his forearm, according to reports on file in Bay County District Court. She told Harsha, the boy's father, that it appeared that the burn needed medical treatment, and Harsha brought the boy to Bay Regional Medical Center later that day.

After initially denying that any of his injuries had been intentionally caused, the boy, during an interview on Sept. 20 with an expert on child abuse, held at the Nathan Weidner Child Advocacy Center, said his burn had been caused intentionally by Michael Pasquale.

"Mike (Pasquale) took lighter fluid and put it in my hand and lit it," the boy said. "It didn't really do much, so he took his lighter and burned my arm. Cassie (Cassandra Pasquale) laughed."

The boy said when he and his father lived on Dean Street, his dad used to send him to the cellar for punishment. He said the abuse continued once they moved in with the Pasquales. He said the Pasquales both kicked him in the chest, hit him in the head with a plastic bat, made him take ice-cold showers and stand in the closet for hours, sometimes wearing a diaper. He said they also deprived him of food and beat him with a belt.

"Cassie tells me before any punishment, 'Your hell begins now,'" said the boy. "Cassie and Michael are trying to get me to be a good kid and says my dad babies me too much."

The child completed kindergarten and first grade at the Bay County Public School Academy, but had not been enrolled in school this year.

When interviewed by police, the Pasquales and Harsha denied the abuse.

Each is being held in the Bay County Jail in lieu of a \$50,000 bond. Judge Timothy J. Kelly ordered them to have no contact with any children if released from jail. An evidence hearing for the three defendants has been scheduled for 2:30 p.m. Tuesday.

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Article published Oct 29, 2007

Access to health care will decline with Medicaid cuts

Submitted by Michigan State Medical Society

EAST LANSING — Access to health care will become even more limited for Michigan's most vulnerable citizens if the legislature makes further cuts to the Medicaid program, according to a survey of physicians by the Michigan State Medical Society (MSMS).

More than two-thirds of Michigan physicians indicated this week that they would be forced to make the difficult decision between dropping out of the Medicaid program altogether or limiting the number of Medicaid patients they will be able to accept if more cuts are made.

"Currently, Medicaid reimburses physicians only about 60 cents on the dollar," said MSMS president AppaRao Mukkamala, MD, a Flint radiologist. "Reimbursement has increased only once in the past decade and frequently pays less than it costs to provide the care."

With another cut, 34 percent of physicians responding to an email survey said they would likely discontinue seeing Medicaid patients entirely and 33 percent said they likely would have to limit the number of new Medicaid patients they can accept.

"In taking care of children, our precious ones, if the reimbursement is any lower, we would have to either close our doors, or stop taking Medicaid," said a pediatrician, one of 120 physicians who replied to the email survey.

"We cannot continue to cut the Medicaid budget as more and more Michigan citizens depend on it for their health care in these difficult economic times," Doctor Mukkamala said. "Many of these families had jobs with health care benefits just a year or two ago, but now Medicaid is their only option."

Doctor Mukkamala said many physicians feel they have supported the chronically under-funded program to their limits. He noted that other MSMS surveys indicate that physician participation in Medicaid has dropped from 88 percent in 1999 to just 64 percent in 2005.

"Physicians are being forced to choose between accepting Medicaid patients and keeping their doors open to all patients," Doctor Mukkamala said. He pointed out that declining Medicaid reimbursement affects access to health care not only Medicaid patients, but also every patient in Michigan.

"When a physician leaves a community or cannot be recruited, that care is lost to everyone," he said.

"A cut would have a significant effect on the ability to recruit new physicians to Michigan and to our practice," one survey respondent confirmed. "Any further cuts would put this neurology practice at risk for closure," another predicted.

Nearly a quarter of the respondents said they would not be able to invest in staff, new equipment or quality improvement measures if more Medicaid cuts are made.

Physicians struggle daily with the Medicaid dilemma, Doctor Mukkamala said.

"Many feel a moral obligation to treat everyone," he said, "yet they know the lifeboat can hold only so many."

"I see cancer patients, so it's hard for me personally to turn them away," a cancer specialist said. "The great and ongoing problem is finding other subspecialists who will see Medicaid patients in consultation."

"Medicaid is not the place to make cuts," Doctor Mukkamala said. "We urge the legislature and Governor Granholm to fix this budget mess without cutting health care for our most vulnerable patients."

"It's a simple answer for me," one physician concluded. "Cut payments and I'm done with Medicaid."

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Article published Oct 29, 2007

Progress made on SCHIP

KEVIN FREKING

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Bush and other critics of a \$35 billion spending increase for children's health insurance say they'll support expanding coverage to families of four making as much as \$62,000 a year, but they want to limit states' ability to go beyond that level.

About three dozen states ignore certain income when determining who can get government-subsidized health coverage. For example, many states exclude child support payments. Others deduct expenses for child care when determining who qualifies for the State Children's Health Insurance Program.

Congress is considering the renewal of SCHIP for an additional five years, but differences remain over who the program should cover and how much money should be spent. The flexibility that states have in defining income is one of the differences that will probably need to be resolved for Democrats to override a promised veto from Bush.

So far, the issue of "income disregards" has received little attention, but that started to change in last week's debate on the House floor.

"You leave it up to the states to say you can't have an income level over 300 percent (of poverty), but you can deduct \$20,000 for a housing allowance or you can deduct \$15,000 for shelter or whatever," said Rep. Joe Barton, R-Texas. "So, what you've got here is the classic bait and switch."

Rep. John Dingell, D-Mich., said that allowing states to exempt some income helps to ensure that low-income families don't have to resort to welfare to get health care for their children.

Another disagreement over the program's future is over the coverage of adults, even though the Bush administration approved most of the waivers that allowed adults into the SCHIP program. Now, the administration wants to remove those adults from the SCHIP rolls more quickly than called for in the bill that passed the House last week.

Under that bill, states would have to move an estimated 200,000 childless adults off SCHIP within one year. Also, by 2010, waivers covering about 500,000 parents would be paid from a separate fund. States that perform well on covering low-income children could continue covering parents through that fund, which would get a lower federal matching rate than under current policy, Dingell said.

Just last year, administration officials testified during congressional hearings that extending SCHIP coverage to parents increased the likelihood that their children would get health insurance too. But Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt now calls the coverage of parents an experiment that took resources away from poor kids. About a dozen states received waivers to cover parents through SCHIP.

"All adults should be moved off SCHIP when their state waivers come up for renewal or within one year, whichever comes sooner," said a policy statement issued by the White House last week.

The bill that passed the House on Thursday would allow about 3.9 million more uninsured children into SCHIP by 2012 — on top of the 6 million now enrolled. An additional 2 million children would leave private coverage by then and enroll in SCHIP, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

The president had recommended spending an additional \$5 billion for SCHIP over the next five years. The bipartisan bill before Congress calls for a \$35 billion increase, bringing total spending to \$60 billion.

The administration announced last week that it could support policies that require more money than it previously recommended. Still, Leavitt cited about \$10 billion that he believes should be trimmed from the bill before Congress.

The administration remains adamant that it won't support a tobacco tax increase to pay for SCHIP's expansion. Instead, it's calling on lawmakers to pick from \$96 billion worth of new fees or spending cuts that were part of the president's budget this fiscal year. However, most of those proposals generated little support in Congress.

Among those recommendations were higher co-payments at the pharmacy for some veterans who are not disabled. Their copays would increase from \$8 to \$15 under the president's budget, saving about \$1.6 billion over five years.

Bush also wants to make higher-income Medicare recipients pay more for their drug coverage as well as for their insurance for doctors' visits. Higher premiums for the drug benefit and doctors' services would generate more than \$10 billion over five years, according to his

budget.

The bill to expand SCHIP relies on a 156 percent increase in the federal cigarette tax, taking it to \$1 per pack from the current 39 cents.

Supporters of the tax increase cite high public support for a tobacco tax. The Kaiser Family Foundation released a poll Friday showing that about 70 percent of those polled supported expanding SCHIP by \$35 billion through higher tobacco taxes.

Tobacco tax supporters say higher prices for cigarettes deter smoking and save lives.

“The health benefits of higher cigarette taxes are substantial,” says a 1990 report from the surgeon general. “By reducing smoking, particularly among youth and young adults, past tax increases have significantly reduced smoking-related morbidity and mortality.”

The Senate is expected to take up next week the bill passed by the House. Democratic leaders are scheduled to meet Monday with a handful of Republicans seen as crucial to deciding whether more changes to the bill will give backers the all-important two-thirds majority necessary to override a veto.



Lawmakers studying options for handling teen inmates

10/28/2007, 7:37 a.m. ET

By **TIM MARTIN**
The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Michigan could benefit from separating teenage offenders who have a good chance to turn their lives around from those who have chosen a life of crime, Rep. George Cushingberry Jr. says.

The Detroit Democrat wants the state to re-examine how it handles the more than 1,000 prison inmates who are 19 or younger. He says more of the youths should be in treatment and rehabilitation programs and housed apart from the prisons that hold older inmates.

"If we can get them out of the system where they are trained to be better criminals, we will do this state and our communities a great service," says Cushingberry, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee.

Republicans say it's an interesting concept that deserves a look. But they want to know more details and how much it would cost before deciding whether to move on the idea.

Cushingberry appears headed toward a plan that would remove some teen offenders from adult prisons and place them in facilities or programs similar to those now handled by juvenile justice under the auspices of the state's Department of Human Services.

That may include more use of facilities such as W.J. Maxey Training School near Whitmore Lake, halfway houses or other programs that involve treatment and rehabilitation.

The debate over which juvenile offenders should be treated as adults is taking place in several states. While some have moved to treat ever-younger offenders as adults, particularly for violent crimes, others are looking at whether that's really the best way to deal with 17-, 18- and 19-year-olds.

A little more than 2 percent of the nearly 50,000 inmates in Michigan's state prison system are 19 or younger. Fewer than 1 percent are 18 or younger.

That doesn't include prisoners who were sentenced under the Holmes Youthful Trainee Act, which allows some teens who plead guilty to certain crimes to have their criminal records erased if they meet all the conditions of a sentence.

The nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency, based on statistics from mid-May provided by the Department of Corrections, provided a snapshot of the teen prison population at one of Cushingberry's subcommittee meetings last week.

According to the statistics, nearly 98 percent of the teen offenders are male, and almost 60 percent are serving minimum sentences of three years or less.

Almost 60 percent are doing time primarily for some sort of violent crime, mostly armed robberies, assaults and home invasions. That doesn't include another 10 percent behind bars primarily for sex crimes.

Nearly 28 percent are in prison for nonviolent crimes. Those offenders may be the most likely candidates for rehabilitation or treatment.

While only 3.5 percent of the cases had drug offenses as the primary reason for imprisonment, drug use is considered a major problem among teen offenders and could be an underlying motive for committing other crimes such as robbery and assault. Three of every four inmates 19 and younger have a known history of drug use, according to the report.

The Department of Corrections is neutral on Cushingberry's idea, spokesman Russ Marlan says.

If fewer youthful offenders were in prison, more space would be available for adults, something that could help the department as it deals with nearly full facilities.

But the department has no say in who comes into the prison system.

"We have to take whoever judges send us, whether they're 14 years old or 79 years old," Marlan says.

Department of Corrections policy calls for separating prisoners who are 16 and younger from the older population in most cases.

Since closing a youth prison in Baldwin in 2005, the state has moved many of its offenders aged 16 and under to the Thumb Correctional Facility. About 25 percent of the state's 19-and-under prison population is housed in the Lapeer prison.

One potential concern about increased treatment plans for teen offenders is finding money for new programs while the state budget is so tight.

It costs about \$80 a day to hold one prisoner in a typical Michigan prison. In juvenile facilities, the costs often are significantly higher because there are more treatment programs available and more staff per prisoner.

With the state budget problems, some lawmakers are unlikely to embrace new programs.

"I certainly think there is some merit to taking a good look at it," Republican Sen. Bill Hardiman of Kentwood says of Cushingberry's idea. "But cost is going to be a concern."

In some cases, moving the youthful offenders could bring down costs. More offenders might be able to be held in lower-security prisons with fewer operating costs than maximum security prisons. And some programs that include treatment options could bring in more federal money.

Barbara Levine of the Citizens Alliance on Prisons and Public Spending, a nonprofit policy group, hasn't yet seen the details of Cushingberry's plan.

But she and other supporters of keeping teenagers out of adult prisons argue that spending more money on treatment and prevention could cut down on the number of repeat offenders, saving the state money in the long run.

"It's more effective to focus on treatment rather than just sending them to prison, where nothing good happens," Levine says.

On the Net:

Michigan Legislature: <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/>

Citizens Alliance on Prisons and Public Spending: <http://www.capps-mi.org/>

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A snapshot look at Michigan's teen prison inmates

10/28/2007, 7:39 a.m. ET

By The Associated Press
The Associated Press

(AP) — There were 1,064 inmates aged 19 and under in Michigan's prison system in mid-May, a small percentage of the 49,893 prisoners overall. A look at their crimes and sentences:

_Armed robbery: 20.4 percent

_Home invasion (2nd degree): 7.7 percent

_Criminal sexual conduct (3rd degree): 6.9 percent

_Unarmed robbery: 5.5 percent

_Criminal sexual conduct (2nd degree): 5.1 percent

_Felony firearm: 4.4 percent

_Assault with great bodily harm less than murder: 4.1 percent

_Home invasion (1st degree): 3.5 percent

_Murder (2nd degree): 3.5 percent

_Car jacking: 3.3 percent

_Assault with intent to commit murder: 3.3 percent

Current minimum sentence length:

_1 year or less: 8.3 percent

_Greater than 1 year to 2 years: 34.7 percent

-Greater than 2 years to 3 years: 16.3 percent

_Greater than 3 years to 5 years: 17.1 percent

_Greater than 5 years to 10 years: 13.3 percent

_Greater than 10 years: 8.7 percent

_Parolable life sentence: 0.1 percent

_Life without parole: 1.4 percent



Man pleads to manslaughter in girlfriend's strangling death

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Saturday, October 27, 2007

By Paul Janczewski

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A Flint man who strangled his girlfriend after she refused to add another woman to their love life pleaded no contest to manslaughter.

Larry W. McCoy, 52, faces up to 15 years in prison when sentenced Nov. 27 by Genesee Circuit Judge Joseph J. Farah.

McCoy was charged with murder in the Sept. 14, 2006, strangulation of Magdalene Brown. A no contest plea is not an admission of guilt but is treated as such at sentencing.

At an earlier hearing, Flint Police Sgt. Lee Ann Gaspar testified she and Sgt. David Bigelow interviewed an emotional McCoy after the incident.

McCoy told police an argument began when he tried to convince Brown, 51, to introduce a third person into their lovemaking. McCoy told police Brown became angry and slapped him, so he struck her back and held her down until she stopped struggling.

A pathologist said McCoy held the woman down for at least three minutes by wrapping his hands around her neck and killing her.

Naomi DeMuth, the victim's daughter, said she was living with the couple at the Holiday Village Mobile Home Park. She said her mother and McCoy had been dating for about seven months.

She said she woke up that morning and noticed her mother's car gone, then checked the bedroom and found her face up on the bed, dead with numerous bruises on her neck.

McCoy, an Ohio native who is being held without bond in the Genesee County Jail, spent time in a Florida prison for killing a live-in girlfriend there. He was convicted of second-degree murder in 1989, but his 40-year prison sentence ended with his release in 2001, officials said.

Attorney Patricia Lazzio, who represents McCoy, earlier said manslaughter was a proper charge because the death resulted from an argument that got "out of control."

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Babb gets 52 to 75 years

Morning Sun

Updated: 10/29/2007 12:26:41 PM

Thomas Babb was sentenced Monday to 52 to 75 years in prison for the Jan. 9 murder of his estranged wife outside the Morning Sun building in Mt. Pleasant.

Judge William Rush heard more than 30 minutes of emotional testimony and then offered his condolences to family and friends of Mary Babb before handing down the sentence in Isabella County Trial Court.

Babb, 38, will serve two years on a felony firearm conviction before serving a minimum of 50 and maximum of 75 years on a second-degree murder charge. Other sentences, to run concurrently with the longer sentence, include five to 7.5 years on two other charges.

Babb still faces sentencing on domestic violence charges in Otsego County. That sentencing is set for next month.

He pleaded no contest to all of the charges in Isabella and Otsego counties last month in a plea deal that included dismissal of an open murder charge.

Emotional testimony on the impact of his crimes came from Mary's parents and brother as well as two others.

Isabella Prosecutor Larry Burdick also made an emotional appeal for Rush to exceed the minimum possible sentence, which was 35 years, citing the seriousness of the crime and Babb's actions, which took both his mother and father from the couple's 4-year-old son, Sammy.

Jeffrey Clothier, who represented Babb, lobbied for Rush to stick close to the low end of the sentencing guidelines, which was 35 years, while Burdick argued for the high end, which was 54 years.

Babb, who had a long history of alcohol and cocaine abuse, drove from Evert to Mt. Pleasant Jan. 9 and waited across the street from the Morning Sun building, where Mary worked as a sales representative.

When she left the office, he sped across the street, showed her his 12-gauge shotgun, rammed her SUV and flipped it over, and then fired two shots into her overturned car while she struggled to undo her seatbelt. The first shot shattered the driver's side window, and the second one killed her nearly instantly.

Babb was apprehended near Evert about two hours later, and had already told family and friends that he had killed his wife.

Further details will follow.

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Men, we must be open, strong and brave

We gathered around the tables, pizza in hand, welcomed by Chris Krajewski, director of domestic abuse services at the Women's Resource Center. It was the Call to Men, and Krajewski introduced the facilitators, Erik Larson and Bill Wilson, who would gather our thoughts about domestic and sexual violence against women.

Then she was out the door, and we were just a group of men talking to one another about violence.

Those discussions — two youth and five adult groups — were held in May, and of 186 invitations to men in the community to join in the discussion, 78 of us responded and showed up.

My section held a diverse cross-section of men, trying to define violence against women, trying to sort out violence between men, trying to figure out why ours is a violent society.

Are we, as men, more prone to violence? Is it a testosterone thing? Is it societal, with society granting men the ability to be more violent, to let "boys be boys?" Does the violence on our streets and in the popular culture make it easier to become more violent in personal relations?

Those of us with wives and daughters talked about our fears for them, the fact if we were there with them we could prevent violence against them but when they were on their own, well, we worried about other men. We were good guys, but we know there are not-so-good men out there.

I know daughter Bree is street savvy as she's had to be in her travels around the world, but I know she's been harassed and demeaned around the world — and living in the U.S. How do I go about changing that, along with my fellow men?

And we had to sort through the different kinds of violence — how do we prevent sexual violence say, versus physical violence? How do we prevent other men from inflicting emotional violence against a wife, a daughter or other relatives?

How could we as men stand up in the community and say, "No more."

"The majority of men in the U.S. are not violent, but we're silent about the violence that other men perpetrate — our silence gives those men the permission," said Ted Bunch here Thursday. "It's not an individual ill, it's a social ill. We need to confront that sexist comment around the water cooler or at the football game — there's a lot of things we can do in our daily lives that we don't."

Bunch is a nationally recognized leader in organizing and educating men in the effort to end violence against women. And there's plenty of that violence right here in our communities.

In the past 20 years, 8,542 women who have been affected by domestic violence have been served by the Women's Resource Center. In the past year, 991 cases.

In bringing men together to talk about violence, WRC leaders acknowledged that while they will work tirelessly to combat domestic violence, one half of the equation — men — have not been working to end that violence. Now it was our turn as men to join and help in that effort.

Wilson, writing in the current issue of the WRC's newsletter, notes that over the past few months of the Call to Men have been difficult, and eye-opening.

"So, I have had to consider some awful and inescapable truths about myself: ways I have devalued the women in my life, looked upon them merely as objects of desire or entertainment, oppressively possessed them (my girlfriend becomes MY girlfriend), used anger or sullenness to get my way, remained silent or even joined in when other guys — nice guys — made sexist or degrading remarks about women. I am 'one of them.' As a man, I am left feeling confused, ashamed and anxious.

"Being a member of the privileged class is a lot like living in a gilded, mirrored box. We all look good to ourselves, it is quite comfortable and we get lost in our own images infinitely reflected back to us; it is all we see. But boxes leave little room for growth; and in the case of this particular box, its inert weight is making the world outside of it more dangerous for women. It is time to ditch the box, climb on out, and fearlessly redefine what it means to be a man."

And, he said, if he is open, strong and brave enough, he'll be able to learn from the women in his life how to be a better man.

We should all be so open, strong and brave enough — women's lives depend on it.

Kendall P. Stanley is News-Review editor. His column appears Monday on the Opinion Page. He can be contacted at 439-9349, or kstanley@petoskeynews.com.

10/29/2007

Senior food program seeks \$1 million

By [Tony Lascari](#)

Hundreds of seniors depend on food from the Council on Aging of Clare and Gladwin counties, and now the council is depending on the community for support to upgrade its kitchen.

The council's nutrition program, which delivers meals to homes and provides food at dining centers, has outgrown its central kitchen at the Antler Arms senior living facility. To expand, the council looked next door to the Community of Christ church building, which it recently purchased and hopes to remodel, said Ellen Polzien, the council's volunteer and outreach coordinator.

Advertisement

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Unless They Have a Place to Call Home**

The family division of Midland County is introducing a Therapeutic Foster Care Program, for youth ages 10-17. We are looking for people, married or single, to provide short-term or long-term care and who can be members of a supportive team. There is payment based on the needs of a child. In addition, the court is also looking for mentors as an alternative to foster care.

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Shaun Hutchins Foster Care Coordinator
989-832-6398**



"This will afford more storage and working room, as well as room for a carport for drivers to load and unload food," Polzien said. "We are seeking grant monies to help fund this project, but will also need to ask the community for help in meeting this goal."

Nutrition Director Tammy Roehrs said the program is crucial for the community, providing 250 to 300 meals every day to people 60 years and older who are in need.

"It keeps seniors independent for many more years and out of nursing homes," she said.

The program might be able to expand to new areas or provide new services after the expansion, Roehrs said.

"We've got a huge population of Baby Boomers coming up and we've got to prepare for that," she said.

The current kitchen is inefficient and lacks storage space, Roehrs said. An old range and ovens and small sink area don't allow for quick production and cleanup.

Plans for the new kitchen include built-in cooler, freezer and storage areas, as well as office space.

The space will mean the meals — with main dishes such as fish, beef stroganoff, chicken, pork and turkey — will be easier to make. The nutrition is important for seniors, who sometimes need to be encouraged to eat and stay hydrated because medications and denture issues make food less attractive, Roehrs said.

She said for many of the seniors, the volunteer drivers who deliver the food are the only contact they have with someone during the day.

"That program does a great service," she said.

Seeing plans for the expanded kitchen space has the kitchen staff excited.

"We're trying to get everyone on board," Roehrs said.

The council has announced that in February it will begin a capital campaign with "A Work of Heart" as the theme. The goal is to raise more than \$1 million through community support and grants, which are being sought from local, state and national foundations.

The kitchen project could take one to two years to complete once funding is available, Roehrs said.

For more information, call the Council on Aging of Clare and Gladwin counties at (800) 952-0056.

Niles Daily Star

ONLINE EDITION

[Print Page](#)

This army is first to help

By ERIKA PICKLES / Niles Daily Star
Monday, October 29, 2007 10:55 AM EDT

NILES - We read the signs, we see the bell ringers during the holidays, we even know where the drop-off box is for unwanted goods. But what a lot of us do not know is how much the Salvation Army actually does for our community.

"What is amazing to me is that, when I talk to people, they seem to only know us as the red bell ringers who stand outside of stores. The truth is, the Salvation Army is much more than that," Salvation Army Social Services Director Jan Nowak said.

The Salvation Army has been in Niles since 1886 - that's 121 years. During that time, the organization has helped hundreds of thousands of families in the area, as well as helping with disaster situations.

Currently, the Salvation Army is responsible for a number of different programs, which include a soup kitchen three days a week, a food pantry which stores food supplies for programs such as Thanksgiving and holiday meals and gift baskets. The organization also provides utility and rent assistance, back to school supplies for area children and a number of other programs.

"In our disaster services, we are generally there to help in whatever way we can. Usually it's providing food to the service workers and the people affected by the disaster," Captain Bill Walters said.

The Disaster Services team recently returned after helping the town of Nappanee, Ind., which was affected by the recent tornadoes.

Jim Mahler is a volunteer with the Salvation Army and a member of the Disaster Services Team. His experience in Nappanee is one he will never forget.

"The thing that makes me feel so special is the fact that, after the tornadoes hit, the Niles Salvation Army were the first people the residents of that town saw. We were there, ready to help and that is something they appreciated," Mahler said.

The majority of the time was spent making sure people were well fed. Mahler said they made over 750 meals and even brought sub sandwiches and bottled water to some 200 church members.

On Friday afternoon, Mahler, along with Pat Colburn, another volunteer, spent the day building shelves in a room at Michiana Christian Embassy. The room at the church has been used for storage by the Salvation Army.

"Before, we had to sort food items in boxes and line them up all along this storage room. Now, with these shelves, we will be able to organize everything. It will also help us see what we have and don't have," Mahler said.

With the holiday season right around the corner, Mahler is hoping to get the shelves finished soon.

"We are always taking donations, this time of year especially as we provide toys and meals for families," Walters said.

Donating to the Salvation Army is simple and can be done a few different ways.

Donations can be made through the United Way of Greater Niles at 683-1011 or by calling the Salvation Army at 684-2660. The address is 424 N. 15th St., Niles.

Items needed are boxed and canned foods, toys and clothing.

"We are not only here to help people physically and mentally, but spiritually as well," Walters added.

ANN ARBOR NEWS LETTERS

Monday, October 29, 2007

Food stamp allowance needs to be increased

Eileen Spring's Sept. 30 Other Voices essay about food stamps related how important food stamps are in stemming hunger in Washtenaw County. The reforms she called for in the Farm Bill are critical to addressing hunger in Washtenaw County.

It is essential to increase the benefit from its current meager \$1.01 per person per meal, minimizing the many families that now find themselves unable to feed their families healthy meals or, in some cases, any meals during the end of the month. Not covering the unemployed seems cruel, as does forcing people to empty their retirement accounts, especially in Michigan's current economic straits.

Having taken the Food Stamp Challenge, I can attest to the impossibility of even coming close to the Food Pyramid guidelines on the current allowance. I was able to maintain a moderately healthy diet, but only by eating only two meals per day most of the week. I lost several pounds, which is fine for one week but problematic on a regular basis.

Sen. Debbie Stabenow is working on the Farm Bill: We must let her know our moral values demand that the Farm Bill fund food stamps first by increasing benefit amounts, raising the asset limits and expanding nutrition and outreach efforts to serve more people in need. Please, call or write her today. (You can copy this letter and send it to her with a short note!)

Susan L. Beckett, Ann Arbor

Early education funding helps

By Judy Samelson

For the Daily Press

Editor's note: The following guest column is in response to a column printed Oct. 22 on this page titled "Don't expect more money for early education to mean long-term gains." The column below is from Judy Samelson, CEO of the Early Childhood Investment Corporation in Lansing.

LANSING — I have to disagree with the guest column written by Lisa Snell, director of education and child welfare at the Reason Foundation, Los Angeles. Ms. Snell asks "shouldn't policymakers be focusing scarce education resources on programs that can make a lasting difference?" Yes, they should, and that is exactly what investing in early childhood education does, provides a lasting difference on the child's future success in school and in life.

If Michigan is going to provide the educated workforce it needs to succeed in the future, we need to continue to make investments in that workforce and that investment should begin at birth. The Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) was created two years ago as part of Governor Granholm's Great Start initiative to assure that every child in Michigan has a great start and arrives to school healthy and ready to succeed.

We, as a state are missing the boat, if we think that investing in early childhood education, including a full-day of preschool or kindergarten does not make economic sense. Providing all of Michigan's children with the opportunity to attend full-day preschool and kindergarten programs to develop the academic, social and emotional skills they need to be successful in school and in life is an investment that will not only benefit our children, but will benefit the entire state. Sadly for Michigan's children, funding for Great Start pre-school next year was one of the casualties of the recent budget agreement.

Ms. Snell unfortunately, is citing information from unscientific research and making it look like something it's actually not. For example, in her article she states that despite increased investments in preschool for at-risk children, more fourth-grade students in Michigan who qualify for free lunch scored below basic reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress in 2005 than in 1998. What we don't know, is whether those children even attended a preschool program. Qualifying for free-lunch doesn't mean a child attended pre-school.

Research conducted on the Michigan School Readiness Program (MSRP), a state-funded program for four-year-old children who may be "at risk" for school failure, found that students attending the program are better prepared when they enter school and continue to do better academically five years later. Compared to their classmates of similar age and socioeconomic background who did not attend the program, 24 percent more MSRP participants passed the MEAP literacy test for grade four and 16 percent passed the mathematics test. In addition, 35 percent fewer participants needed to repeat a grade, resulting in a savings to the state of an estimated \$11 million a year.

Ms. Snell also says in her article that full-day kindergarten programs do not provide any long-term effects. In a study completed in Indiana, researchers found that compared to half-day kindergarten, full-day kindergarten leads to greater short-term and long-term gains. In one Indiana district, for example, students in full-day kindergarten received significantly higher basic skills test scores in the third, fifth and seventh grades than students who attended half-day or did not attend kindergarten at all.

Providing early childhood education, including pre-kindergarten, to all of Michigan's children is a sound educational investment. By developing students' academic abilities, improving their social and emotional skills and other issues that impact their learning, effective early childhood programs are exactly what will lead to higher graduation rates, create a prepared future workforce and attract businesses to our state.

What I think Ms. Snell should have asked at the end of her article was “can policymakers afford not to be focused on the early childhood programs that are making a lasting difference?”

Oct 29, 1:12 PM EDT

Budget bills moving, but dispute arises over privatizing services

By DAVID EGGERT
Associated Press Writer

LANSING, Mich. (AP) -- Lawmakers and Gov. Jennifer Granholm remained divided Monday over whether more private providers should handle adoption, foster care and juvenile justice services - the last big sticking point in resolving the state budget.

But signs of progress in other areas emerged as House-Senate conference committees began passing spending plans for universities and for departments ranging from agriculture to the state police.

The full House and Senate could start approving those bills later Monday, although action could depend on whether an agreement is reached over how many functions in the Department of Human Services should be handed to private agencies.

The Legislature has until Wednesday to pass the budget bills to avoid another partial government shutdown such as the one that occurred in the early hours of Oct. 1.

Sen. Bill Hardiman, R-Kentwood, is among those pushing to put more DHS services into private hands.

He said it costs the state \$550 a day to house each youthful offender at the W.J. Maxey Boys Training School in Whitmore Lake but would cost only \$225 to \$250 a day if the youths were dealt with through private companies.

"We need to move forward in this area. The money we save, we can spend in other needed areas," Hardiman said. "To ignore this, I think, is absolutely wrong."

Republicans want to partially close Maxey and send some offenders to the less expensive facilities.

The same reasoning is behind their push to turn over more foster care and adoption services to private agencies, which now provide 40 percent of services to Michigan children.

Granholm, a Democrat, opposes turning over more DHS services to private providers. So do labor unions representing state workers who would lose their jobs if their work is sent to private agencies.

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Details of developing state budget proposal

10/26/2007, 6:01 p.m. ET

The Associated Press

(AP) — The state Legislature is expected to finish a new budget deal early next week. Some details of the tentative plan:

K-12 SCHOOLS: Schools would get an average increase of about 1 percent in their per-pupil funding. But the amount would vary, with highest-funded schools getting \$48 more per student and lowest-funded districts getting \$96 more per pupil, or a minimum of \$7,204 for each student. The average increase is less than half what Gov. Jennifer Granholm proposed.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES: Schools would get an average 1 percent increase, down from the 2.5 percent Granholm proposed. The percentage increase would vary by college. A proposal to spend \$7 million on nursing programs would be dropped.

UNIVERSITIES: Schools would get an average 1 percent increase, down from the 2.5 percent Granholm proposed. Payments delayed from the last fiscal year would be paid. Lawmakers from both parties want to preserve about \$57 million in need-based tuition aid for private college students, but Granholm's office has said that's still open to negotiation.

NATURAL RESOURCES: Hunting and fishing license fees probably won't increase, but the lack of money would mean nearly 80 Department of Natural Resources jobs would be eliminated. Some state forest campgrounds and ski trails could close. The lack of money eventually could effect fisheries and state parks.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY: The budget assumes permit fees would increase but leaves the voting on higher fees until later this year. Lawmakers are reluctant to back fee increases, so staff could be cut. That would limit the agency's ability to issue air and water quality permits businesses need.

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Three temporary, unpaid layoff days would be scheduled for 500 attorneys, investigators and support staff around the Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's holidays to help avoid permanent layoffs.

SOCIAL SERVICES: More foster care and adoption services could be handed over to private agencies, although that part of the budget deal did not appear to be done as of Friday.

MEDICAID: Eligible 19- and 20-year-olds would still be covered, but some home health care services could be cut. Adults who take care of children eligible for Medicaid also would keep their benefits.

STATE POLICE: No state troopers would be laid off. But forensic labs would close in Marquette and Sterling Heights. Six technicians would be laid off and 19 others would be transferred to another lab.

VETERANS AFFAIRS: About \$431,000 would be cut from veterans homes in Grand Rapids and Marquette, with money saved through what lawmakers called efficiencies; no layoffs are planned.

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State workers to get no increase next year under tentative deal

10/26/2007, 5:44 p.m. ET

By KATHY BARKS HOFFMAN
The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Prison guards have joined other unionized state workers in agreeing to contracts that include no pay raises in the next budget year.

A tentative agreement with the Michigan Corrections Organization was reached Thursday night. Deals with United Auto Workers Local 6000, the Michigan State Employees Association, Service Employees International Union Local 517M and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 25 were reached last week.

Under the contracts, workers wouldn't get a pay increase until October 2009, when they would get 1 percent more. A 3 percent increase would be included in the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1, 2010.

State workers would have to pay more in health care premiums, deductibles and co-pays for health care services under the contracts, which would take effect Jan. 1 if ratified by workers and approved by the state Civil Service Commission.

Some workers also would continue to be required to buy generic prescription drugs instead of costlier brand-name versions. Prison workers would keep their uniform allowance.

The tentative contracts also contain a clause that says if lawmakers authorize a pay increase for themselves before October 2011, the contracts could be reopened to renegotiate state workers' wages.

Union members are now voting on the contracts. Deadlines are different for each union, but voting must be complete before the state Civil Service Commission meets Dec. 5 to approve the contracts.

Some lawmakers have grumbled that state workers were getting a 4 percent increase in the current budget year, even as the state struggled to make ends meet. Gov. Jennifer Granholm had said workers deserved the increase, but her administration held the line on any further hikes in the next budget year.

UAW Local 6000 Vice President Jimmy Settles said in a statement that the deal will help both parties move forward during a critical period for state government.

SEIU Local 517M, which represents three bargaining units, said union officials and the Office of the State Employer deserved credit for working through complex and difficult issues.

"We knew going in that this was going to be a very difficult climate to negotiate state employee agreements," Local 517M Executive Vice President Phillip Thompson said in a release.

Workers saw pay go up 2 percent in October 2005 and 4 percent in October 2006.

But in fiscal 2004, state employees had to take unpaid days off to help the state deal with an ongoing budget crisis. Workers also had to work 40 hours a week but be paid for 38, banking the unpaid two hours toward either vacation time or toward their payout when they left state service.

The state employs more than 50,000 people, with 38,500 represented by the five unions.

On the Net:

Office of the State Employer: <http://www.michigan.gov/ose>

Michigan Corrections Organization: <http://www.mco-seiu.org>

SEIU Local 517M: <http://www.seiu517m.org>

AFSCME Council 25: <http://www.miafscme.org>

UAW Local 6000: <http://www.uawlocal6000.org>

Michigan State Employees Association: <http://www.msea.org>

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